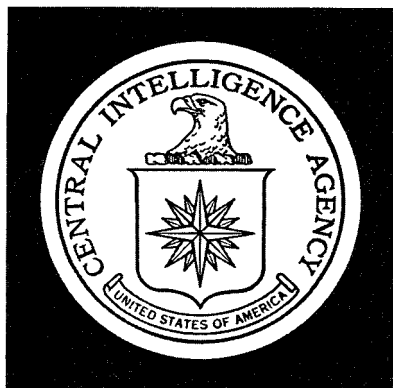


Top Secret



DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam

Top Secret

115

16 July 1967

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Information as of 1600
16 July 1967

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HIGHLIGHTS

Communists inflicted heavy damage on the Da Nang Air Base with rocket fire on 15 July. US Navy patrols intercepted a Communist trawler attempting to infiltrate arms into South Vietnam. The Central Election Council recommended against the candidacy of General "Big" Minh. Premier Ky is in Dalat consulting with his advisers on which senate slates to support and on future cabinet appointments.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:
On 15 July Communist forces inflicted damage on the Da Nang Air Base with 122-mm. rockets (Paras. 1-2). In an associated incident Communists freed nearly 1,200 prisoners from a jail southeast of Da Nang (Paras. 3-4). On 14 July a Communist force overran a Regional Force/Popular Force outpost in Tay Ninh Province (Para. 5). Allied operations continue in various parts of the country (Paras. 6-9). An attempted infiltration of arms and ammunition by sea into South Vietnam was thwarted on 15 July by US Navy patrols (Paras. 10-11).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam: The Central Election Council recommended on 15 July that General Minh's presidential slate be disqualified (Paras. 1-3).

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III. North Vietnamese Military Developments:
There is nothing of significance to report.

IV. Other Communist Military Developments: There is nothing of significance to report.

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Early on 15 July an enemy force of unknown size fired approximately 50 122-mm. rocket rounds into the Da Nang Air Base from 24 firing positions located on a mountain approximately seven miles southwest of the sprawling 1,600-acre base. US casualties were eight killed and 175 wounded. Of the approximately 235 fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters based at Da Nang, 45 were either destroyed, heavily damaged, or lightly damaged.

2. This was the third, and most severe, rocket attack on the Da Nang Air Base since the beginning of the year. The Communists apparently fired the rockets in five barrages of ten each. Almost immediately after the first barrage struck, counter-battery fire was executed and aerial fire support was dispatched. The enemy fire cratered the west runway, making it temporarily inoperative and then shifted to a main troop bivouac and aircraft parking area on the south and west side of the base. Five ammunition revetments--part of a large bomb dump--received direct hits as did several troop barracks. Latest damage assessment reports show ten US aircraft totally destroyed, 28 heavily damaged, and 17 lightly damaged at a loss of an estimated \$80 million.

3. Approximately two hours before the rocket attack on the Da Nang Air Base, a Communist force overran the Quang Nam provincial jail which is located about 14 miles southeast of Da Nang in the city of Hoi An--the provincial capital and the Quang Da Special Zone Headquarters. Enemy forces inflicted moderate casualties on the defenders and released 1,196 detainees from police custody.

4. The enemy force was reported to be dressed in Vietnamese Army uniforms with the insignia of the 51st ARVN Regiment, which is headquartered in the Hoi An area. The enemy was presumably able to gain the advantage of surprise and sow confusion among the jail's defenders. Friendly forces suffered nine killed (four civilians) and 40 wounded (29 civilians) as

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[redacted]

opposed to Communist losses of five killed and six weapons captured. Of the detainees, 30 were killed--the majority by the fire the Communists employed to breach the jail walls--206 have since been recaptured, and 960 remain at large. Although the majority of the detainees had not been formally identified as prisoners of war, the circumstances under which they were captured lead officials to believe that most were members of the enemy's irregular forces.

5. On the night of 14 July an estimated enemy battalion overran a combined Regional Force and Popular Force outpost in Tay Ninh Province approximately four miles east of the provincial capital. The Communists preceeded the attack with a 60-mm. and 82-mm. mortar barrage, and grenade fire. A battalion-size ground assault overran the outpost. Friendly losses have been reported at 15 killed, 17 wounded, and 14 missing, with at least 24 weapons and some communications equipment falling into enemy hands. Known enemy losses are one killed. Several of the friendly casualties were members of a Revolutionary Development team working in the area which for security reasons had been spending their nights in the outpost. [redacted]

[redacted]

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Allied Operations

6. On 15 July US and ARVN forces in Operation HICKORY II engaged Communist forces in two battles near Gio Linh in Quang Tri Province. In both battles the enemy broke contact after receiving allied artillery and air bombardments. US forces suffered one killed and 30 wounded, and ARVN had nine killed and 30 wounded. Fifty-five Communists were killed and 21 enemy weapons were captured. [redacted]

[redacted]

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7. Approximately two miles southwest of Gio Linh, US Marine elements combining the area of Operation BUFFALO--which terminated on 14 June--uncovered an enemy grave site containing 187 enemy bodies. This raises the reported enemy losses in BUFFALO to 1,290 killed, in contrast to US losses of 159 killed, 885 wounded, and one missing.

8. US forces searching the battle area of the 12 July contact in Pleiku Province between a US company and probable elements of the NVA 1st Division discovered 25 fresh graves containing 46 enemy bodies. This raises the enemy losses to 156 killed as compared to US losses of 32 killed, 27 wounded, and 12 missing.

9. Republic of Korea troops in Operation HONG KIL DONG in Phu Yen Province engaged enemy forces on 14 July in a series of battles resulting in 62 enemy killed without any reported Korean casualties. In one contact, Korean forces engaged an enemy platoon 14 miles northwest of the provincial capital of Tuy Hoa, killing 22 of the enemy. The other two engagements occurred 18 miles northwest of Tuy Hoa as Korean forces were combing a cave complex which apparently extended over a two-mile area. The complex contained a number of weapons, including six 75-mm. recoilless rifles and three machine guns--and a large amount of communications equipment and documents. The nature of the equipment in the cave suggests that the Koreans may have overrun either a Communist sapper unit headquarters or a principal subordinate of the Phu Yen provincial unit.

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Arms Infiltration By Sea

10. On 15 July US Navy patrol ships ran aground a steel-hulled trawler off the coast of South Vietnam approximately 11 miles northeast of the capital of Quang Ngai Province. The trawler--120 feet in length, painted olive green and without name, flag, or radar/electronic antennas--was first observed on 11 July about 25 miles southeast of Da Nang and kept under surveillance while in international waters. As the craft entered the territorial waters of South Vietnam, it was challenged, however, it ignored the challenges, attempted evasive action, and a running fire fight ensued. The trawler was taken under fire by air and artillery units as well as naval craft and suffered two secondary explosions and a fire in the pilot house before being run aground. The trawler appeared to be bound for Cape Batangan on the coast of Quang Ngai Province. This is the second trawler intercepted in the same area since 14 March.

11. Korean troops helilifted to the area to seize the craft suffered casualties of four killed and six wounded. Twenty-three of the enemy on board the trawler were killed. Korean forces seized 1,192 weapons--primarily AK-44 and AK-56 rifles--and over five million rounds of ammunition. The trawler has been towed to Chu Lai by the US Navy.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. The Central Election Council on 15 July recommended to the Provisional National Assembly's special committee on elections that General Duong Van Minh's presidential ticket be disqualified because his running-mate, Tran Ngoc Lieng, once held French citizenship. The presidential election law stipulates that candidates must have been Vietnamese citizens since birth.

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3. Although committee chairman Nguyen Thanh Vinh had earlier indicated that the committee would probably approve Minh's candidacy, the Central Election Council's recommendation, while not binding, may prove decisive. The charge against Lieng is apparently legal and is supported by documentary evidence--a copy of a 24 February 1950 decree signed by then French premier Georges Bidault granting Lieng French citizenship. The council's move in making Lieng, rather than Minh, the victim will allow the government and the assembly to remove a thorn in their sides without making a martyr of Minh personally.

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III. NORTH VIETNAMESE MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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